

example for the world. I count chief among these values America's longstanding concern for the rights of workers and for protection of the environment. The proposal I am transmitting to you recognizes the importance of those concerns. It makes clear that the agreements we conclude should complement and reinforce those values.

Ever since President Franklin Roosevelt proposed and the Congress enacted America's first reciprocal trade act in the depths of the Great Depression, the Congress and the President

have been united, on a bipartisan basis, in supporting a fair and open trading system. Our predecessors learned from direct experience the path to America's prosperity. We owe much of our own prosperity to their wisdom. I urge the Congress to renew our longstanding partnership by approving the proposal I have transmitted today.

WILLIAM J. CLINTON

The White House,
September 16, 1997.

Statement on Senate Action on Education Programs *September 16, 1997*

The vote by a narrow majority of the U.S. Senate to support the Gorton amendment undermines the bipartisan spirit of cooperation that is so vital to improving American education. At worst, this decision to block grant education programs is, as Secretary Riley said, a "back-door attempt to kill off the Department of Education." At best, the vote was a hasty, ill-considered decision that would have a serious impact on our schools.

I welcome the Senate's overwhelming support for my proposal to offer States and communities voluntary national tests in fourth-grade reading and eighth-grade math. However, the adoption of the Gorton amendment less than 2 hours later eliminated the very funding needed to continue development of these tests.

The Gorton amendment would halt many of our most successful efforts to improve education, including our efforts to get computers into every classroom, raise standards through Goals 2000, establish more charter schools, assist young people in making the transition from school to work, help parents and schools keep our children safe and drug-free, and create more opportunities to help immigrant children learn English and stay in school. The amendment would seriously harm the title I program, which provides extra help to low-income students so they can master the basic skills of reading and

math and reach high academic standards. It also undermines programs targeted to help gifted and talented students, support arts education, and promote exciting new efforts to create technology partnerships. Further, this amendment would slash funds used to help adults with severe disabilities obtain employment.

This is not a vote, as some would suggest, about who controls public education. Rather it is a vote about whether the Federal Government will maintain its commitment to help local communities strengthen accountability and raise academic standards in basic skills, improve teaching and learning, assist parents and schools in keeping children safe and drug-free, promote public school choice for parents and students, and prepare all of our students for the 21st century.

The Department of Education has historically targeted its funding to schools that serve disadvantaged students. If the Gorton amendment became law, the wealthiest school districts would be the winners and the rest of our communities would inevitably be the losers.

Politics must stop at the schoolhouse door. The Gorton amendment is unacceptable. I understand a similar provision may be offered in the House. Let me be clear. If necessary, I will use my veto power to make sure that no such provision becomes the law of the land.